WITHNELL URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.

ANNUAL REPORT

of the

MEDICAL OFFICER of HEALTH

for the year

1919.

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for the Year 1919.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,

I have pleasure in submitting my Annual Report on the health and Sanitary administration of your district for the year 1919.

I regret that so far as the prevalence of Infectious Disease is concerned, especially during the early part of the year, my report is an unfavourable one.

POPULATION.

The population of your district in the year 1911 stood at 3,400, rising to the highest figure in 1912, being 3,410.

I have received the following figures for the year under report, from the Registrar General. For the purpose of the birthrate the civilian population is estimated at 2,962 and for the deathrate at 2,843, compared with 3,094 for the birthrate and 2,761 for the deathrate in 1918.

PHYSICAL FEATURES of the DISTRICT.

The Withnell Urban District covers an area of 4,798 acres (exclusive of water) an increase of 1,178 acres since 1907. It lies from four to six hundred feet above sea level, is very exposed, the prevailing winds being from the South West and West.

The population is mainly of the industrial classes. The chief industry is the manufacturing of cotton, and during the war, from the manufacture of explosives, the brick works also employing a number of employees.

BIRTHS.

For the year under report there are 42 births, 16 males and 26 females, giving a birthrate of 14.1. This rate shows

an increase of 0.6 on the year 1918, when although 42 births were notified, the larger population for that year made the smaller rate of 13.5. The decrease on the average for the previous ten years is 4.2.

In my Report for the year 1912 I stated "I regret to have to report the lowest birthrate of which I have any record." For that year the rate was 17.30.

Going backwards from 1919 the figures run 42-42-44-45-64-65-73-59-82 and so on. For the ten years prior to 1910 the average number of births in any year was 79 or 80, with an average rate of 23.1.

DEATHS.

During the year 37 deaths were registered, 16 males and 21 females, giving a deathrate of 13.0. This figure compares favourably with last year when the rate was 18.10.

The deathrate shows an increase of 0.9 for the ten years average. The epidemic deathrate is nil. The large epidemic deathrate, 0.36 for 1918 being principally due to the virulent form of Influenza which was rife in the district.

The commonest causes of death were Organic Heart Disease with eleven cases, Malignant Disease four cases, Bronchitis three cases, Apoplexy three cases, Senility two cases, Pulmonary Tuberculosis two cases and Nephritis two cases.

Twelve residents were above the age of 70 at death. The average adult age at death was 61.4, compared to 52 in 1918.

INFANTILE MORTALITY.

During the year one child, a boy, died, from Influenza and Broncho-pneumonia, before reaching the age of twelve months.

Since the Infantile Mortality rate is calculated from the Birthrate, a low birthrate means a high Infantile deathrate if any deaths occur under one year of age.

The deathrate is 23. In 1918 it was 119. This gives a decrease of 96 compared with 1918 when the number of births was 42, and five deaths occurred.

SANITATION.

WATER.

The water for the district is obtained from the Liverpool Corporation Reservoir. There is a plentiful supply except in the case of one or two farms during the summer months. There is no possibility of contamination.

RIVERS and STREAMS.

No action has been taken with regard to the pollution of streams, except watching the effluent from mills.

DRAINAGE and SEWERAGE.

The drainage system is satisfactory, testing and flushing being carried out monthly. The system of works laid down for the disposal of sewage is still satisfactory, the methods used being precipitation, filtration, Bacteria beds, irrigation and sprinklers.

There are 42 Privy middens, 571 pail closets, 150 fresh water and 50 waste water closets. No conversions have been made from one system to another.

I again wish to draw your attention to the desirability of a water-borne system of sewage.

SCAVENGING.

This work is carried out satisfactorily by the Council, under the supervision of the Surveyor.

House refuse is carted to an isolation tip, the property of the Council, whilst all privy middens are emptied by night.

ROADS.

The roads are in fair condition, compared to surrounding districts.

LIGHTING.

The quality of the gas has been very unsatisfactory.

NUISANCES.

During the year 20 Informal Notices were served and 20 nuisances abated, no legal proceedings being necessary.

SCHOOLS.

The sanitary condition of the schools is fair, although two are only supplied with privy middens.

DAIRIES.

There are 26 cowkeepers in the district and 6 milk purveyors, all registered. The supply of milk is adequate for the needs of the district.

The dairies and cowsheds were all periodically inspected, when their condition was found to be fair. The Regulations made under the Order of the Local Government Board are not fully enforced.

800 cubic feet of air space is allowed for each cow.

MEAT INSPECTION.

No meat was found to be unsound. During the year no meat has been slaughtered in the district.

I should like to draw your attention to the very great necessity for the installation of a Public Abattoir, with a loose box attached and a room in which meat could be hung, as the present slaughter houses are not only in poor condition, but they are quite inadequate, in both modern methods and appliances for the humane slaughtering of animals, and for the needs of the district.

BAKEHOUSES.

The condition of these is satisfactory.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

I am glad to report a slight falling off in the number of cases of Infectious Disease, the number notified being 18, against 25 for 1918.

There were nine cases of Pulmonary Tuberculosis, five of Pneumonia, two of Erysipelas, one of Measles and one of Poliomyelitis. Whilst the Epidemic deathrate was nil the Phthisis deathrate was 0.70.

During the first four months of the year there was a further outbreak of Influenza, followed in some cases by Pneumonia, but the type was not nearly so virulent as that of the previous autumn. Only one case proved fatal.

Although a stock of Diphtheria Anti-toxin is kept in the district none was required.

The only non-notifiable disease prevalent in the district was Mumps, in the third quarter of the year.

MATERNITY and CHILD WELFARE.

The Babies Welcome, started in your district, by private enterprise, in 1912, continues its work on the same lines. The expectant mothers report themselves to the midwife or a nurse of the District Nursing Association. They are visited regularly in their own homes and taught what preparations to make for the arrival of the child.

Infant consultations are held once a fortnight at the Babies Welcome Room, the children are inspected and weighed and the mothers receive instructions from qualified persons on the health, care and feeding of the children. An address is given once a year at the Annual Meeting.

It is proposed to hold an Annual Baby Competition, in connection with the above, the first of which was held in 1919. There were a large number of entries, and the general health, condition and care of the babies was remarkably good.

PUBLIC HEALTH ADMINISTRATION.

The duties of the Sanitary Inspector, Housing Inspector and Surveyor of your district are combined.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES HOSPITAL.

The Infectious Diseases Hospital, which has accommodation for 25 to 30 beds, has not been opened during the year. The bed at the Small-pox Hospital, for which a retaining fee is paid to the Blackburn Rural District Council, has not been required.

I consider that a new steam disinfector should be installed at your Hospital as it may be urgently required.

CHEMICAL and BACTERIAL WORK.

No specimens have been examined, except sputum, which was examined under the National Health Insurance Act.

HOUSING.

General Conditions.

There are 770 inhabited houses in your district, giving an average of 3.8 persons per house, the same figure obtaining in 1914 when the average was 4.4 persons per house, owing to a higher population.

There is one house in the course of erection, built by private enterprise.

Of the houses 693 are for the working classes, 32 are farms, 35 shops, 7 inns and 13 large houses.

30 houses are required as there is a general shortage of housing accommodation. A Housing Scheme has been submitted, under the Housing, Town Planning &c. Act 1919, to meet the above requirements.

Overcrowding.

There is a very close relationship between the marriage rate and overcrowding, as owing to a shortage of housing accommodation the first year of married life is almost invariably

spent with either of the young couple's parents.

I again wish to draw your attention to the fact that it is a shortage of attractive, up-to-date dwellings, at reasonable rents, which is a main factor in keeping down the marriage rate in your district.

No action has been taken during the year re overcrowding.

Fitness of Housing.

The housing accommodation, although limited, is on the whole good, for with the exception of some of the older houses, there is no slum property. There are some cases, in the older houses, where there are no back doors and no yard accommodation.

All modern houses have been made with windows to open top and bottom, bath, back door and proper yard accommodation. I should like to see all new houses built with hot and cold water for bath, as owing to the presence of so much chronic rheumatism in your district this is of importance, and with the water-borne system of sewerage.

The general character of defects found to exist were dampness, faults in roofs, floors, windows, ceilings, and the flagging of yards. No action has been taken, however, regarding unfit houses, under the Public Health Acts or the Housing Acts.

No action was taken, nor were any complaints made that any areas were unhealthy.

APPENDICES. Statistics for twelve months ending December 31st, 1919.

No complaints were made as to unfitness of dwelling houses by householders.

30 dwelling houses were inspected, under Sec. 17 of the Housing Act of 1909, none of which were considered unfit for human habitation. The defects in 20 houses were remedied

without the making of closing orders. Your Sanitary Inspector has presented me, on several occasions, reports on property which he has inspected at my request.

No action has been taken under Sec. 28 of the Housing Act 1919.

No Closing Orders or Demolition Orders were made.

No Dwelling houses have been demolished.

Although no action has been taken re obstructive buildings, I should like to again draw your attention to my reports of 1912 and subsequent years, in which I drew your attention to some property, where the powers bestowed on you by the Housing and Town Planning Act enabled you to carry out some alterations which would be an improvement to the whole district.

The Sanitary Inspector is the official engaged in Housing work. As I pointed out to you I consider it very advisable that you should appoint a whole time official for this work, as your Sanitary Inspector is unable to devote sufficient time to this work.

In the periodical survey of the district full notes are made in the case of each house as to its position, relation to the highway, mode of entrance to house, number and measurement of the rooms, method of access to the bedrooms, lighting, side or back door, yard accommodation, air space round house, condition of house, sanitary accommodation, water supply, drainage, drainage of subsoil, cleanliness, comfort, ventilation, heating and dampness.

I am,

Your obedient servant,

S. WALKER MACLEAN.

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